

Message Text

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TAGS: PGOV, FOR, FR

SUBJECT: ALAIN POHER, INTERIM PRESIDENT OF FRANCE

1.SUMMARY: RESIDENT OF THE FRENCH SENATE ALAIN POHER, 64, WILL SERVE AS INTERIM PRESIDENT OF FRANCE UNTIL THE INAUGURATION OF A NEW PRESIDENT FOLLOWING ELECTIONS. AS PRESCRIBED BY THE CONSTITUTION, ELECTIONS MUST TAKE PLACE WITHIN 20 TO 35 DAYS OF THE PRESIDENCY BECOMING VACANT. POHER IS WELL DISPOSED TOWARD THE UNITED STATES AND HAS BEEN A STAUNCH SUPPORTER OF EUROPEAN UNIFICATION. HE BECAME WELL KNOWN IN FRANCE AS A RESULT OF HIS ROLE AS INTERIM PRESIDENT AFTER DE GAULLE'S RESIGNATION ON APRIL 28, 1969, AND THE CAMPAIGN HE SUBSEQUENTLY WAGED AS A CENTER CANDIDATE AGAINST POMPIDOU IN THE JUNE 1969 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. ON THE SECOND BALLOT OF THOSE ELECTIONS HE WON 37 PERCENT OF THE VOTES. IT IS CONCEIVABLE, THOUGH UNLIKELY, THAT POHER COULD DECIDE TO RUN AGAIN IN THE COMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER STUDYING LAW AND CIVIL ENGINEERING POHER RECEIVED A DIPLOMA FROM "SCIENCES PO." HE BEGAN HIS CAREER IN 1935, AND AT THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR II WAS WORKING AT THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE. ACTIVE IN THE

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RESISTANCE DURING THE WAR, HE RETURNED TO THE

MINISTRY OF FINANCE WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PEACE, AND IN 1946 WORKED AS CHEF DE CABINET TO FINANCE MINISTER ROBERT SCHUMAN. ELECTED SENATOR ON THE CENTER TICKET FROM SEINE-ET-OISE IN 1946, POHER HAS SINCE SERVED CONTINUOUSLY IN THE SENATE, EXCEPT FOR SEVERAL SHORT STINTS IN THE GOVERNMENT. IN 1948, HE BECAME SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FINANCE IN THE SHORT-LIVED GOVERNMENT OF ROBERT SCHUMAN AND, LATER THE SAME YEAR, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE BUDGET IN THE GOVERNMENT OF HENRI QUEUILLE. HE SERVED AS COMMISSIONER GENERAL FOR GERMAN AND AUSTRIAN AFFAIRS, FROM 1949 TO 1950, AND FROM 1950 TO 1952 HE WAS THE FRENCH DELEGATE TO THE INTERNATIONAL RUHR AUTHORITY. IN 1957-58, HE WAS SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ARMY AND NAVY UNDER PREMIER FELIX GAILLARD.

3. PRIOR TO HIS FIRST INTERIM PRESIDENCY AND UNSUCCESSFUL PRESIDENTIAL BID IN 1969, POHER WAS KNOWN ABOVE ALL FOR HIS ACTIVITIES IN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS. HE WAS A PROTEGE OF ROBERT SCHUMAN -- THE "FATHER OF EUROPE." DURING THE 1950'S, POHER WAS ACTIVE IN THE EUROPEAN COAL AND STEEL COMMUNITY AND SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION FOR THE COMMON MARKET. FROM 1966 TO 1969 HE WAS PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. IN THE LATTER CAPACITY, HE LED A MISSION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES IN SEPTEMBER 1967.

4. WHEN POHER ASSUMED THE PRESIDENCY OF THE FRENCH SENATE IN OCTOBER 1968, HE REPLACED GASTON MONNERVILLE WHOSE LONG-STANDING FEUD WITH GENERAL DE GAULLE HAD LED TO THE LATTER'S THREATENING THE SENATE WITH EXTINCTION AS A LEGISLATIVE BODY. HE PLAYED A MAJOR PART IN RALLYING THE OPPOSITION AGAINST DE GAULLE'S APRIL 1969 REFERENDUM, WHICH WOULD HAVE SEVERELY LIMITED THE POWER OF THE SENATE. POHER, MILD-MANNERED AND SOFT-SPOKEN, HAS SINCE DEVOTED HIMSELF TO ENHANCING THE ROLE OF THE SENATE.

5. OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE, POHER WORKED TO ESTABLISH A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NEW, MORE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SENATE AND THE ELYSEE. THROUGH A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF MODERN PUBLIC RELATIONS, HE HAS ALSO DONE MUCH TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE SENATE AND ITS ROLE. POHER IS MARRIED, AND HAS ONE DAUGHTER. HE SPEAKS NO ENGLISH ALTHOUGH HE UNDERSTANDS IT A LITTLE. STONE

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